



Tsilhqot'in Stand With Nuchatlaht First Nation At Historic Title Appeal

On the first day of hearings today before the British Columbia Court of Appeal, the Tsilhqot'in Nation stands in solidarity with the Nuchatlaht Nation, and its Tyee Ha'wilt Jordan Michael, in the ongoing fight for recognition of Aboriginal title to Nuchatlaht hahoulthle (territory).

Roger William, Chief of Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government, and plaintiff in the *Tsilhqot'in Nation* title litigation (the first judgment in Canadian history to recognize Aboriginal title, on the ground, in Tsilhqot'in territory), joined his fellow Tsilhqot'in Chief Dale Hance, of Tl'etinqox Government, at the Court of Appeal in Vancouver to express support for the Nuchatlaht First Nation on behalf of the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

The hearing before the Court of Appeal centres on the extent of Nuchatlaht Aboriginal title to a portion of Nootka Island. The B.C. Supreme Court recognized strong claims of Aboriginal title to certain areas, but not the entire claim area, ultimately declining to issue a declaration of Aboriginal title while leaving open the option of seeking Aboriginal title to smaller sites. Nuchatlaht First Nation has appealed the decision, contesting this restrictive approach to proof of title, and seeking broader recognition of Aboriginal title in its hahoulthle.

"It is important for us to stand here today with Tyee Ha'wilt Jordan Michael and the Nuchatlaht First Nation because our Nation has travelled a similar journey. We spent years fighting against a "postage stamp" approach to Aboriginal title that denies and disregards our strong connections to our traditional hunting, fishing and gathering areas that support our Indigenous way of life. The Supreme Court of Canada rejected that outdated vision of title in the *Tsilhqot'in Nation* judgment in 2014, and the B.C Court of Appeal must reject it again here."

—Nits'il?in (Chief) Roger William, Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government

"I'm honoured to stand in solidarity with the Nuchatlaht today because, like our Nation, they are standing up against harvesting and harm to their forests over generations without consideration of their culture, their rights or their title. I hold my hands up to

them for continuing the fight for recognition of Aboriginal title. As Indigenous people, we know that we hold title to our unceded territories according to our own laws and ways of life. What is at stake here is the opportunity for the courts to do justice, end this era of denial, and compel government to respect our authority and responsibilities on our own lands.”

—Nits’il?in Dale Hance, Tl’etinqox Government

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